

VILAS COUNTY FORESTRY, RECREATION, & LAND DEPARTMENT



Vilas County Forestry, Recreation & Land Committee

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Vilas County Forest Administrators Grant

2017 Work Plan

Forest Acres: Regular Entry Acres 41,078.62; Special Acres 61.27; Total Acres 41,139.89

OUR MISSION

Natural resources, such as those provided by the County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the County Forest is to manage, conserve, and protect these resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations.

The County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks; and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national, and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future using sustainable forest management practices.

DESIRED FUTURE FOREST CONDITIONS

In general, the Vilas County Forest plan is to maintain the current distribution of forest cover types as they currently exist. However, there will be changes in the acreage of some cover types. Age class distribution will change to be more diverse as the Forest moves toward regulation of the annual allowable harvest of the different cover types. The annual allowable harvest on the Vilas County Forest for the next 15-year period is approximately 1,070 acres per year. The minor changes in forest type acreage will primarily occur in the Aspen, Oak, and Pine cover types. The Aspen type will decrease slightly as the Pine types increase.

Aspen is the most abundant timber type on the Vilas County Forest, occupying 13,682 acres. The Aspen stands managed today are second-generation Aspen stands with first generation origins from logging and wildfires of the late 1800's through the early 1900's. Because Aspen provides habitat values to a wide variety of wildlife and is an important species for the wood products industry, the Vilas County Forest is committed to maintaining a large percentage of its Aspen acreage. However, there will be opportunities during harvest planning and natural events to convert a portion of the Aspen cover type to other forest cover types through natural or artificial regeneration techniques. These conversion opportunities will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Conversion activities could affect approximately 650-acres or 5 percent of the Aspen cover type over the next 10-15 years. The Oak, Jack Pine, Red Pine, and White Pine forest cover types will benefit the most from these conversion activities.

Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan identifies several broad conservation actions for forest

communities located within the Northern Highland Ecological Landscape. One of the broad ecological opportunities identified within this Ecological Landscape includes increasing the representation of red and white pine forests. Most of the Vilas County Forest lies within this Ecological Landscape, as Vilas County was once part of the 'Great Pinery'. One of the goals of conversion is to look for opportunities to increase the forest cover type of pines. Conversion of Aspen to pine could increase the forest cover type of pines by as much as 350-acres over the next 10-15 years.

Vilas County intends to maintain or slightly increase the current acres of Oak type on the County Forest. Currently only 7% of the forest acreage is Oak type (2,636 acres). Conversion from Aspen to Oak could increase the Oak forest cover type on the County Forest by as much as 300 acres. The Oak Forest Cover type consists primarily of two different Oak types; Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) on higher quality sites and habitat types, and Northern Pin Oak (*Q. ellipsoidalis*) on sandy soils and poorer habitat types. The general management objective within the Oak types is to maintain Oak to produce the maximum quantity and quality of sawtimber and veneer within ecological and economic limitations, and maintain the wildlife and mast-producing benefits. The higher quality Oak sites may also be candidates for extended rotation, thereby contributing to age class diversification within the Oak type. Oak stands targeted for extended rotation will be identified when they are scheduled for treatment. On nutrient poor, droughty soils with Northern Pin Oak stands, clearcutting will be used to regenerate a component of Oak along with Aspen, White Birch, Jack Pine, and/or Red and White Pine.

The County Forest stands managed today originated after the logging and wildfires of the late 1800's through the early 1900's. They are for the most part even-aged. Forest cover types of species that are shade tolerant and longer-lived provide opportunities to move individual stands to an uneven age or an all-age condition. These opportunities occur primarily in the Northern Hardwood and White Pine cover types. The decision to diversify the age class within individual stands will be made on a case-by-case basis at the time of a scheduled harvest, considering the capabilities of the site and available economic resources.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

- Conduct the 2017 scheduled timber harvest of approximately 1,148 acres. The acreage to be treated by timber type are: Aspen 278 acres; White Birch 3 acres; Balsam Fir 36 acres; Red Maple 9 acres; Northern Hardwoods 123 acres; Oak 165 acres; Jack Pine 23 acres; Red Pine 302 acres; White Pine 174 acres; Black Spruce 26 acres; Tamarack 9 acres. A detailed listing of the Forest Stands scheduled for treatment and the treatment types is attached.
- Continue the routine updating of the Forest Reconnaissance Information, approximately 2,000+ acres each year. A detailed listing of Compartment Stands is available at the Forestry Office.
- Prepare the Spring 2018 Timber Sale. There are 1207 acres scheduled for treatment. The acreage to be treated by timber type are: Aspen 298 acres; White Cedar 25; White Pine 74 acres; Red Pine 278 acres; Jack Pine 151 acres; Oak 203 acres; Northern Hardwoods 147 acres; Black Spruce 12 acres; Norway Spruce 19-acres. The acres not ready for harvest will be deferred and rescheduled. See the attached 2018 Harvest Schedule.
- Coordinate with WDNR Liaison for assistance of 866 work-hours per year, which includes specialist assistance for disease and insect surveys, training, wildfire prevention & suppression, equipment operation for site preparation, and trail & road rehabilitation.

- 150 ☐ Contract for chemical and/or mechanical site preparation, approximately 140 acres.
- 151 ☐ Contract for mechanical release, approximately 50 acres.
- 152 ☐ Supervise site preparation for 2018 planting and natural regeneration, 140 acres.
- 153 ☐ Oversee the administration of Timber Sale Contracts, (approximately 25) including the
- 154 scaling and billing of wood products and documentation of contract activity.
- 155 ☐ Supervise the survey of plantations for survival, approximately 1,000 acres.
- 156 ☐ Supervise the documentation, sales, and permitting for firewood, camping, maps, air
- 157 photos, and Christmas trees & boughs.
- 158 ☐ Administer the documentation and issuance of logging access permits to protect the
- 159 County Forest property when private landowners need access through the County Forest
- 160 Land in the course of managing their private timber resources.
- 161 ☐ Administer the documentation and issuance of disabled access permits on the County
- 162 Forest for individuals with mobility disabilities.
- 163 ☐ Investigate the possible conversion of Aspen stands growing on sandy, excessively
- 164 drained soils or growing under a canopy of Red and White Pine
- 165 ☐ Administer the Certification of the County Forest under the standards of the Sustainable
- 166 Forestry Initiative (SFI). Take corrective actions recommended by the Wisconsin –
- 167 DNR, WCFA legislative and Certification Committee, and approved by the Sustainable
- 168 Forestry Initiative to maintain compliance based on 2016 SFI audit results.
- 169 ☐ Update the 15 Year Management Plan as changing conditions arise including
- 170 development of Torch Lake RV Park and Campground.
- 171 ☐ Investigate and address forest health issues (including invasive species) as they arise and
- 172 continue monitoring of Spruce Budworm.
- 173 ☐ Develop an interactive mapping tool of trail assessments for the use of PDMD's on the
- 174 County Forest. Continue trail assessments for appropriate use of PDMD's on County
- 175 Forest trails based on environmental and safety criteria.

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177 COUNTY FOREST ROADS

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- 179 ☐ Inspect and determine the needs for the maintenance and improvement of the 48.43 mile
- 180 County Forest Road System.
- 181 ☐ Coordinate with the Vilas County Highway Department for the grading of the 48.43 mile
- 182 County Forest Road system in spring and fall.
- 183 ☐ Schedule and/or contract with private business and/or Highway Dept. for patch gravel,
- 184 side-brushing and other maintenance needs within the budget.
- 185 ☐ Document work on County Forest Roads.

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187 LAND

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- 189 ☐ Contract for the certified survey of County Forest boundary lines, including the
- 190 establishment of corners and witnesses, necessary to conduct the establishment of timber
- 191 sales; approximately 2 miles.
- 192 ☐ Continue the resolution, by proportion of the mismeander, of Scat Lake in Sec.9, T.40N.-
- 193 R.9E.
- 194 ☐ Continue the scheduled maintenance of the County Forest boundary lines and corners
- 195 which have been established via certified survey or a line by agreement. Approximately
- 196 20-30 miles of boundary lines and associated corners are inspected and painted each year.
- 197 ☐ Administer access requests, access permits (notice renewals; issue new), resolve

boundary disputes and encroachments.

- ☐ Pursue acquisition of forest land under, §28.10, Wis. Stats. to be held for replacement and entry into County Forest Law (§28.11, Wis. Stats.) due to expansion plans of the Landfill, as determined beneficial by the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee.
- ☐ Continue planning and collaboration with stakeholders, including the towns, to propose and develop recreational trails and policies to the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee based on recommendations of the Recreational Trails Ad hoc Committee.

Administer the disposition of lands acquired by Vilas County through tax delinquency.

- ☐ Contract for environmental assessments of parcels prior to court action.
- ☐ Locate parcels and mark for public identification; erect “For Sale” signs.
- ☐ With the assistance of the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee, determine any land management activities that will enhance the sale of tax deed parcels and increase County income.
- ☐ Contract for formal appraisals of parcels to be sold.
- ☐ Prepare a prospectus and resolution for disposition of tax deed parcels for review and approval by the County Board.
- ☐ Prepare approved parcels for public auction by sealed bid.
- ☐ Maintain real estate website.
- ☐ Conduct the transfer of ownership and maintain records.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Supervise and plan for the improvement and maintenance of:

- 1/3 of the Habitat/Hiking Trail System, approximately 36 miles of mowing including the associated wildlife openings and parking areas. The specific units and maps are available in the Forestry Office.
- Maintain Habitat/Hiking Trail Unit signage.
- Determine and plan treatment of wildlife openings to control invasive plant species and planting to clover. The specific locations are yet to be determined.
- Coordinate with the Wisconsin – DNR, a Kirtland’s Warbler habitat restoration plan and treatment on jack pine regeneration.
- Determine the needs for berm/gate maintenance and gate installation.
- Maintain the deer exclosure fencing surrounding 4 sites planted to enhance wildlife food and cover under the electric transmission line.

RECREATION

The Parks & Recreation Administrator is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the County-owned recreation facilities.

- Sixteen (16) picnic areas with three (3) beaches.
- Ten (10) boat landings.
- Six (6) panfishing piers.
- One (1) shooting range.
- Nine (9) camping sites.
- Cranberry Island Recreation Site.

- Oldenburg Sports Park: Act as Vilas County liaison with the Headwaters Youth Soccer Association and the Softball Association. Administer the lease agreements.
- Fairgrounds: Act as Vilas County liaison with the Fair Board and Tennis Association. Oversee the lease agreements.
- Continue development of the River Road equestrian facilities and Torch Lake RV Park and Campground.
- Brushing of Tamarack Creek to improve navigability south of Tamarack Campground.

TRAILS PROGRAM

The Parks & Recreation Administrator is responsible for the supervision and coordination of the Snowmobile Trails Program, ATV Trails Program, bicycle trail and equestrian trail development.

- Contracts for the maintenance of the Funded Snowmobile Trail System – 489.3 miles.
- Contract administration and trail inspection.
- Records and disbursements.
- Trail reroutes and contract administration for improvement projects.
- Oversee the contracting of the construction/rehabilitation of recreational bridges and trail reroutes.
- Contract for the maintenance of the Funded ATV Trail System- 13.0 miles.
- Oversee expansion and grooming of the X-C Ski Trail System, 7.5 miles. (Pioneer Creek CC Ski Trail)
- Plan and collaborate with stakeholders to propose and develop recreational trails and policies to the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee based on recommendations of the Recreational Trails Ad hoc Committee.
- ATV trails: Apply for funding and contract for maintenance and development of ATV trails per Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee and County Board approval. Oversee any development projects.
- Oversee and collaboration of maintenance of designated equestrian trails - 10.9 miles (Ski Hill and Torch Lake Loops).

RECORDS

- ☐ The Forest Administrator is responsible for the maintenance of the operations records for: Forest Management, Forest Certification, Logger Certification, County Lands (including lands obtained by tax deed and sold), Access Permits and Easements, Fish & Wildlife Conservation Projects, and the Buildings & Equipment of the Department.

FORESTRY, RECREATION, & LAND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- ☐ Create the agendas for all Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee meetings.
- ☐ Prepare and distribute information to the Committee regarding Department activities, resolutions to be brought before the County Board, correspondence and requests for action.
- ☐ Record and maintain a copy of Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee meeting minutes.

ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT; TRAINING/CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Maintain involvement and support of Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA).
- Continue participation on the WCFA Legislative and Certification Committee.
- Continue involvement with Trees For Tomorrow.
- Attend seminars on current knowledge and application of forest science through the Society of American Foresters, WDNR, University Extension, etc.
- Attend safety and personnel workshops offered by Vilas County.
- Coordinate services for and from other County departments.
- Continue membership in the Society of American Foresters and maintain current status in the Certified Forester Program.

STAFF

- Supervise Department staff of Assistant Forest Administrator, Forestry Technician, and Administrative Assistant.
- Process the hiring of 1 Forestry part-time position and oversee that program.
- Coordinate with Recreational Officer and Sheriff's Department for enforcement of County ordinances on the County Forest.

BUDGET

- Prepare the Department Monthly Budget Summary for review by staff and the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee.
- Prepare the 2018 Forestry Department Budget.

PREPARE THE DEPARTMENT "ANNUAL REPORT OF OPERATIONS"

HOST THE ANNUAL WORK PLANNING MEETING WITH WDNR FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE PERSONNEL

MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT, & FACILITIES

- Prepare an annual inventory of equipment.
- Determine needs for maintenance and replacement of tools, equipment, etc.
- Contact Public Property Committee regarding infrastructure needs. Projects: repair water damage to the basement of the Forestry Office, construct seedling cooler in new storage building.

Submitted and approved by Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee

Steve Doyen, Chair

Date